

rhodesian history

The Journal of The Central Africa Historical Association

Volume 6

1975

G. LIESEGANG

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Printed in Rhodesia by Sebri Printers (Pvt.) Ltd. Salisbury, Rhodesia.

RHODESIAN HISTORY

The Journal of the Central Africa Historical Association

Edited by R. S. Roberts and P. R. Warhurst

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N.H. WILSON: POPULISM IN RHODESIAN POLITICS*

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THERE HAS NEVER been a populist International nor an exchange of views between different populist leaders on the meaning or significance of their respective struggles. There is consequently a degree of isolated spontaneity peculiar to populist parties which makes it difficult to place the Southern Rhodesian populist movement in an international perspective. This article therefore restricts itself to a discussion of Rhodesian populism with particular regard to the views of N.H. Wilson, who tried to propagate a populist philosophy and programme suited to the circumstances of Southern Rhodesia.

It is undoubtedly easier to define precisely what populists opposed than what they favoured. In nineteenth century Russia, *narodniks* sought a return to the uncomplicated and idyllic rural community, self-sufficient and uncorrupted by urbanization. In that they resented encroachment by centralized authority and the institutions of industrialized society, they differed little from their North American counterparts. Nineteenth century populism in the United States was founded largely on the resentment of a rural society which, not having been industrialized itself, was very much the victim of the trusts and monopolies that industrialization bred. The control of credit and the purchasing of produce rested largely with interests which the small farmers of the Midwest felt to be no longer representative of the American ideal. The traumatic transition from a nation of citizen-farmers to a nation of combines and corporations to which farmers were subordinated inspired the creation of Peoples' Parties designed to resurrect what was represented as the Ideal of the Founding Fathers.

Fundamentally this ideal took as its premise the notion that men on the land alone reflected that spirit of altruistic endeavour that kept governmental policy on the path of enlightened national self-interest. Farmers fed the nation and sought, not profit, but communal self-sufficiency in so doing. The State's duty was the preservation of this system and the protection of its protagonists. Now alien influences based on the East Coast sought to extend their influence into the heart of the nation by directing the banks that controlled credit, combining the land to increase profits, which in turn generated further

*This article is based on a paper delivered at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 29 Jan. 1976.

capital development in the East. Whilst opposition was farmer-based, it did of course include those interests that were farmer-dependent, small shopkeepers and urban communities that served the land. Together they constituted a non-industrial bourgeoisie that placed its faith in community co-operation, whose members knew their individual worth, and in similar vein, distrusted paper money and the process of demonetization.¹

In the difficult post-war years of the 1920s the government of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia rested with individuals whose primary interest was the development of a mining industry that until 1923 had been the responsibility of the British South Africa Company. Responsible Government had obliged this Company to share power and influence with a cabinet of settlers and a handful of representative institutions. Opposition to this governmental system emanated from organized labour on the one hand and various self-appointed guardians of 'the people' on the other. The people in this case were the rural bourgeoisie consisting of small-time farming interests, usually credit-dependent, and allied interests such as agrarian suppliers and small commercial interests. This alliance had been largely responsible for the attainment of self-government in 1923. It had also been consistently opposed to the Chartered Company's monopoly of land and power and after 1924 observed with increasing unease the developing affinity between Sir Charles Coghlan's Rhodesian Party government and the former ruling interest.

Some of the Rhodesian Party's backbenchers were also concerned that what had been the party of the people, the Responsible Government Party, was now in effect a party of the Establishment or vested interest. The Budget Debate has traditionally provided a forum where disgruntled Members are permitted a certain licence to speak on any topic at length, and the Budget Debate of May 1927 brought to a head the divergence of outlook within the party. Already in 1925 one member, R.D. Gilchrist, had crossed the floor to sit with the four Indepen-

¹ For further information on this topic, see R. Hofstadter, 'North America', in G. Ionescu and E. Gellner (eds), *Populism: Its National Characteristics* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 9-27. The movement was finally extinguished by Roosevelt's New Deal; but something of the spirit of populism is still embodied in the Social Credit Party of mid- and western Canada. Urbanized labour, it should be noted, steadfastly resisted the overtures of rural populists, quite understandably refusing to subsidize the rural sector at the expense of urban living standards. In South Africa, the pact of 1924 between Hertzog's populist National Party and Rand Labour represented a convenient electoral arrangement rather than ideological affinity.

dent members of the Opposition.² Now F.L. Hadfield (Bulawayo Central) announced his resignation from the Rhodesian Party and claimed that two or three others would follow. He was referring to Max Danziger (Gwelo), Captain H. Bertin (Salisbury South), and F.P. Mennell (Bulawayo District).³

Danziger duly followed suit and gave as his reason the need for increased expenditure on land settlement and his opposition to Concessions.⁴ Bertin accused the Government of not having a programme, and Mennell in a letter to the press said that the dissentients 'never gave an undertaking to blindly follow a particular set of leaders without reference to the programme which they were elected to carry out'.⁵ Mennell, Bertin and Hadfield then joined with the now six Independents (Montagu, Fletcher, Martin, Gilfillan, Gilchrist and Colonel Frank Johnson) to form a Progressive Party whose principles included opposition to monopolies and concessions, a vigorous immigration policy, the development of Matabeleland, a close scrutiny of the Railways Act which had left the railways in the hands of the British South Africa Company, and an emphasis upon the need to develop African Reserves. Other points related to the need for a West Coast port, development of a Greater Rhodesia and depoliticization of a Civil Service still dominated by ex-Company men.⁶

The Chairman of the Progressive Party, Neil Housman Wilson, came to Southern Rhodesia in 1906 at the age of 20 to join the British South Africa Police. In 1910 he joined the Native Department where he remained until 1923 when an irregularity concerning finance at Mount Darwin where he was stationed obliged him to transfer to the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture.⁷ He resigned from the Public Service in 1924 to take up farming and was one of the first to believe that cotton could be grown in the lowveld. When farming failed, his interests turned to journalism and politics.

² The four Independent members were, Sir Ernest Montagu (Hartley), R.A. Fletcher (Western), J.L. Martin (Eastern), and G.E. Gilfillan (Eastern). Although Montagu had been a prominent Company official and all four had been associated with Unionist sentiment in 1922, Independents at the time of the first Assembly should be seen as representative, not of the former ruling interest, but of small business and mining concerns and the none too wealthy farmer who felt excluded from the new political system.

³ [Southern Rhodesia] *Debates [of the Legislative Assembly]* (Salisbury, Parliamentary Printers, 1927), 6, 17 May 1927, 441.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19 May 1927, 605.

⁵ [*The Bulawayo Chronicle*], 14 June 1927.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 16 June 1927; for further information on the Progressive Party, see P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], D[ominions] O[ffice], 63 [Southern Rhodesia, Original Correspondence 1926-9], 3/1302, 4465, 7979 and 10465: D.O. 63/5/4754; and H.I. Wetherell, 'Continuity and Change in Opposition Politics in Southern Rhodesia 1923-62' (Univ. of Rhodesia, unpubl. M.Phil. thesis, 1974).

⁷ S235/365 (Chief Native Commissioner, Correspondence: Darwin District, 1923 Audit Inspection Report).

While working in the Native Department he had been elected General Secretary of the Public Services Association and it was in this capacity that he had served as an Advisory Member of the Southern Rhodesian delegation at the Terms of Union Convention at Cape Town in 1922. In the following year he had founded the *Native Affairs Department Annual*, *NADA*.⁸ Thus his interest in politics was an early development; as a trooper in the B.S.A.P. he had written several letters to British Members of Parliament advocating extensive white settlement in Central Africa.⁹ It was this concern and his alarm at the inactivity of the Rhodesian Party government that led him to publish, while still farming at Zaka in 1926, a manifesto for a Progressive Responsible Government Party.¹⁰

Announcing that 'the spirit of Responsible Government did not die with the referendum nor is it today represented in the Rhodesian Party', Wilson asserted that the Progressive Responsible Government Party would rest on the support of the people and would stand for a consistent body of political doctrine. His party would seek control of the railways, increased land settlement, provision for native development and the construction of a deep water port.¹¹ With these views it is hardly surprising that Wilson should seek common cause with the dissident Members of the Legislative Assembly in 1927, and the result was the foundation of the Progressive Party later that year. In the 1928 General Election the Progressives secured the return of only four members to the Legislative Assembly, but they enjoyed the support of 30 per cent of the electorate and won a substantial proportion of the votes in Mashonaland.¹² The Country Party, founded in 1927 as the political arm of dissident farmers in the Rhodesia Agricultural Union and designed to represent farming interests more directly in the Assembly, also contested the 1928 election considering itself the true repository of the settler spirit in much the same way as Progressives did; but its showing had been disappointing and Wilson now perceived that only if the popular parties, including Labour, united in a common front could any substantial measure of electoral success be achieved. He therefore agreed to continue as Chairman of the Progressive Party if given a mandate to negotiate fusion with the Country Party.¹³ This he was able to do once the Progressive Party had been converted to the need for marketing controls which formed the main plank in the Country Party's platform and of its parent body, the Rhodesia Agricultural Union.

⁸ *NADA* (1961), 38, 104, obituary.

⁹ Interview with Mr L.K.S. Wilson, 20 July 1974.

¹⁰ N.H. Wilson, *Progressive Responsible Government Party: Statement of Aims* (Zaka, privately, mimeo, 1926).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² F.M.G. Willson (ed.), *Parliamentary Elections [and Referenda in Southern Rhodesia]* (Salisbury, Univ. Coll. of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1963), 123.

¹³ *The Spokesman*, 27 Oct. 1929.

The other major issue, the British South Africa Company's continued retention of the Colony's mineral rights, was one on which the popular parties were fully in agreement.¹⁴

At the Progressive Party's Congress in July 1929, Wilson formally proposed the merger of the Progressives, the Country Party, and Labour — 'the peoples' parties', as he described them. Speaking to his motion, the party chairman said that the difference between opposition and government was growing clearer each day. The opposition wanted the country developed 'by and for the people of the Colony' whereas government believed that the Colony could best be developed by encouraging large corporations, especially the B.S.A. Company. 'The Rhodesian Party was the only party in the country with its headquarters in London,' Wilson declared.¹⁵

The Rhodesia Herald described Wilson's speech as 'a touch of arrogance'. 'Why they should any more be peoples' parties than the Rhodesian Party which has twice gained a majority of the peoples' votes is a little difficult to see,' one editorial remarked; but the *Argus* Press was deliberately missing the ideological point.¹⁶

By October 1929 negotiations had removed the final stumbling-block to fusion — the acceptance of marketing controls by the urban-based Progressives — and the new grouping, the Reform Party, emerged. At its inaugural congress, Wilson, now Reform Chairman, emphasized that a 'natural cleavage' had developed between opposition and government that cut across the previous Responsible Government-Unionist division. However, he forecast that it would probably be some time before the electorate threw off their affiliations of the past.¹⁷ In fact, with a brief interlude in 1933, it was to be thirty-three years.

The Reform Party sought to improve Southern Rhodesia's constitutional position, determine ownership of the mineral rights, nationalize transportation, assist primary producers, work towards the creation of a Greater Rhodesia, and introduce legislation for efficient marketing (i.e. statutory controls). It was clear that Labour was determined to maintain its own identity and Reform's acceptance of the need for marketing controls had only confirmed this position. If Wilson thought that events would now move inexorably forward to a popular government by 1933, he was greatly mistaken. The fragile alliance with

¹⁴ The Country Party also concurred with the Progressive Party's advocacy of a 'White Rhodesia'. This became a major tenet in populist thinking and was reflected in demands that Whites should displace Africans as postmen, telegraph messengers, drivers and road gang supervisors. A necessary corollary to the implementation of such a policy would have been the removal of the reserved clauses from the 1923 Constitution and this demand became increasingly significant, see [*The Rhodesia Herald*], 12 July 1929.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *The Spokesman*, 27 Oct. 1929.

the agrarian Country Party proved tenuous. Its leaders had been reluctant to alienate the new Minister of Agriculture, R.A. Fletcher, a former Progressive who now sought to establish closer links with the Rhodesia Agricultural Union. Many ex-Country Party members deserted the Reform Party to work independently through the R.A.U. so that when the party held its annual congress in April 1930 it consisted mainly of ex-Progressives. Colonel Johnson, the only man of stature in the party and a unifying factor, was away in England; and Wilson refused to postpone the congress, fearing that Johnson would capture the presidency if he returned. J.A. Edmonds and W.A. Moubray, last of the ex-Country Party leaders, resigned in protest and Wilson was duly elected President.¹⁸ Captain Bertin, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, put in a perennial bid for the presidency but Wilson was firmly in control of the delegates. Yet, his election, if anything, only served to widen the rift within the new party. *The Bulawayo Chronicle* described the congress as 'a screaming farce' and pointed out that principles were being sacrificed for personality.¹⁹ Important individuals refused to accept office and Wilson himself withdrew increasingly from the party's affairs, preferring instead to concentrate on his newspaper, *The Spokesman*, which he founded in 1928, and the White Rhodesia Association of which he was a founder member and Secretary.

The White Rhodesia Association has been formed as a non-partisan body and the Secretaries of the Rhodesian Party, the Country Party, the Progressive Party and the Labour Party had all been members of the founding committee set up in January 1929 under the Chairmanship of Dr G.M. Huggins, M.L.A.²⁰ The Association sought to establish in Southern Rhodesia a large white population with the aim of making the Colony a white man's country in which all classes and grades of European could find an occupational niche. This would involve, of course, a substantial measure of segregation. Speaking to a meeting of the Association in June 1929, Wilson explained how the process of segregation would work and his plan later became known as the 'Twin Pyramid' policy. He likened the economic structure of the Colony to a stepped pyramid of which the three lower and larger steps were occupied by Africans — unskilled, semi-skilled and in fewer cases, skilled. The upper steps of progressively smaller size were occupied by members of the 'overlord class' according to their ability. The African was steadily ascending the pyramid forcing the white man upwards to a higher step where more ability was needed. Wilson observed that even in the best races there were men who could not do skilled work and there was no place for them at the top. They could not compete with Africans so they dropped out to become 'Poor Whites'. The country, then, was

¹⁸ *Bul. Chron.*, 25 Apr. 1930.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *The Spokesman*, 31 Jan. 1929.

faced with two alternatives: it could let things go on the way they were in which case Rhodesia would become 'a black man's country', or alternatively it could make Rhodesia 'a white man's country' by implementation of the 'Twin Pyramid' policy. 'In the new order,' said Wilson, 'there would be two pyramids, one black and one white, a Colony so ordered that every type, class and grade would find a place in the economy of society which he could fill.'²¹ In Wilson's ideal society, the Blacks would be confined to the tribal areas where they could manage their own affairs and rise to positions of authority, while in the white areas a greatly increased European population would consist of the primary producers providing the necessities of life and the remainder, the services and amenities. The white area would be divided into zones and over the years certain occupations in a given zone would be closed to Africans gradually forcing them back into the Reserves.

If Wilson was regarded as the main spokesman for the White Rhodesia Association in the country at large, it was left to Huggins, the Junior Member for Salisbury North, to voice the Association's views in the Assembly; in April 1931 he proposed that the Government should institute 'a gradual process of economic and political segregation on a territorial basis'.²² Citing examples of the failure of racial integration, Huggins also opposed the principle that the African should remain servile to the European. He suggested that Native Councils be set up in the Reserves in exchange for the elimination of Africans from the voters roll. H.U. Moffat replied effectively enough, pointing out that 'so long as the native is of service to the Europeans, it is hopeless to expect the European to take a high ethical stand';²³ but it was Huggins whose reputation enjoyed a boost. Whereas the Establishment considered Danziger's suggestion that Africans be shunted wholesale into Bechuanaland, as a little eccentric, and Wilson's views as rather radical, there could be no questioning Huggins's respectability. He represented the country's most prestigious constituency which gave him its full support when, later in 1931, he resigned from the Rhodesian Party over the question of economies necessitated by the Depression. Salisbury North contained the Colony's largest concentration of Civil Servants and Huggins saw little reason why their salaries should be reduced because of governmental incompetence. His constituents naturally concurred.²⁴

²¹ *Rh. Her.*, 7 June 1929.

²² *Debates*, 10, 8 Apr. 1931, 368.

²³ *Ibid.*, 6 May 1931, 1678.

²⁴ *Rh. Her.*, 3 Mar. 1932.

It was therefore understandable that Huggins should attract the attention of the Reform Party at a time when its fortunes were beginning to recover.²⁵ The effect of two years of Depression had provided them with a useful weapon with which to belabour Moffat's administration.

Huggins was elected President of the Reform Party at its annual congress in July 1932, although he did not himself attend. In a process of elimination he defeated the incumbent, J.W. Watkinson, the hapless Bertin, Gilchrist, Captain F. Smith, the party chairman, Sir Hugh Williams and J.H. Smit who later withdrew in favour of Huggins. Although much of the time of the Congress was occupied by consideration of the Amalgamation question on which opinion was divided, it was clear that 'grass roots' opinion favoured more immediate and 'popular' considerations. Branch motions submitted included demands for the removal of Africans from the voters roll, implementation of Wilson's segregation plans, a testing of the mineral rights ownership, replacement of Africans by Europeans in a whole range of occupations, assistance to small-workers in mining, an end to monopolies, legislation to deal with miscegenation, a 'forward' immigration policy, and assistance schemes for increased settlement on the land.²⁶ Watkinson declared that 'the one abiding principle of the Reform Party[was] the development of Rhodesia as a true Colony, as the home of the white man, and against its exploitation primarily as dividend-earning for the benefit of the B.S.A. Company'.²⁷

The Argus Press, now visibly intimidated by Reform's current popularity, proclaimed in an editorial that the economy was recovering and that the Colony's affairs had been well managed under the Rhodesian Party: 'Caution instead of ambitious projects has been a wise policy and the successors to the present Government will benefit from it.'²⁸ It was nevertheless widely believed that Reform could not lose. An attractive platform of increased segregation, protection for white artisans in the form of Industrial Conciliation legislation, relief of unemployment, and 'a comprehensive and constructive body of economic, constitutional and social reform' had a profound impact on a society where one out of every seven Europeans had been unemployed, many losing their jobs to Africans, and where economic privation was widespread. Huggins provided the credible and respectable leadership that the party so desperately needed, Wilson and Hadfield the

²⁵ The party had also enjoyed its first electoral success when J.H. Smit, the late Mayor of Salisbury, was returned for Salisbury South at a March 1931 by-election, see Willson, *Parliamentary Elections*, 129.

²⁶ Reform Party, 'Agenda for the Annual Congress . . . Gwelo on July 25th and 26th 1932'.

²⁷ *Rh. Her.*, 26 July 1932.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 July 1932.

ideology that presented a dynamic and coherent appeal and the organization that ensured that electoral potential was adequately tapped. As long as the Colony's economy had slowly and steadily expanded, Moffat's uninspiring leadership and *laissez-faire* policy had satisfied the electorate; the crisis of the Depression, however, had crystallized racial insecurity and inspired demands for widespread industrial protection of a kind that the Rhodesian Party's backers would have found dubious. A last minute bid by the Government in 1933 to purchase the mineral rights and introduce marketing controls came too late to save the party's flagging fortunes.

The electorate went to the polls in September 1933 determined, not to reward the exponents of austerity and retrenchment, but to insist that the Government in future mobilize national resources on behalf of the more vulnerable sector of white society. It was fundamentally a populist protest designed to remind the State that its primary consideration lay not with the protection of profit, but with the promotion of institutional safeguards that would insure against a repetition of the recent experience.

In the event, the Reform Party won 16 seats, the Rhodesian Party 9, and Labour 5.²⁹ It would appear that the people, as in 1922, had triumphed over trusts and monopolies. However, the Reform Party like many Rhodesian opposition groups, was a motley collection of disillusioned Government supporters such as Huggins, Jobling and Gilchrist, radical ideologues such as Wilson and Hadfield, or inveterate and committed anti-Charter campaigners such as Sir Hugh Williams who had mobilized his private fortune to contest the B.S.A. Company's rights and refused to pay royalties to the Company on his mine. Huggins himself was an empiricist. Despite his association with Wilson's philosophy it was soon apparent that ideology would have to be discarded in favour of current reality. 'When I came into office I started looking at the economic facts and soon realized that [segregation] was impossible,' he later confessed.³⁰ Office provided Huggins with a closer realization of the strength of vested interest and despite the attachment of important representative institutions to his party, Huggins was unable or indeed unwilling to move against vested interest at the speed that his party's militants would have liked.

Speaking during the election campaign, Huggins had indicated that there were five members of his party standing for the Assembly who would not be prepared to 'go over the top' with him on any point in the party programme.³¹ The five referred to were undoubtedly

²⁹ Willson, *Parliamentary Elections*, 130.

³⁰ M. Rifkind, 'The Politics of Land in Rhodesia' (Univ. of Edinburgh, unpubl. M.Sc. thesis, 1968), 43.

³¹ *Rh. Her.*, 1 Sept. 1933.

Wilson, Williams, R.B. Dickson, Colonel T. Nangle and Captain R.E. Downes. The irony was that the party's left wing were only too happy to follow their leader 'over the top' in the fulfilment of Reform's programme and populist principles. What they objected to was Huggins's failure to adhere to that programme and his association with interests that had just been decisively defeated at the polls. Several areas of conflict emerged.

At the outset of the 1934 session, Wilson proposed that the Government actively pursue the attainment of Dominion Status, a motion that was well received in the Assembly but which Huggins knew to be impracticable at the time.³² Although he did go to London to discuss the removal of certain of the reserved clauses of the 1923 Constitution, backbenchers felt him to be insufficiently zealous in this regard and Huggins himself had indicated during the debate that he preferred complete internal self-government to Dominion Status. They were also alarmed at certain provisions of the proposed Work Colonies Bill which was designed to tackle problems connected with unemployment.³³ When the Cabinet attempted to renegotiate the Customs Agreement with South Africa and reached an accord with the Chartered Company on the railways, the more vociferous backbenchers claimed that they had not even been consulted. Then on the death of the Minister of Agriculture, C.S. Jobling, Huggins tactlessly appointed his successor from outside the Assembly despite the fact that several of his supporters in the Assembly were interested in the job.³⁴

The details, however, should not be allowed to obscure the main point at issue. The left wing of the Reform Party believed that it held a mandate from the people to initiate a popular programme as advocated by the Reform Party at the election. They felt that Huggins was soft-pedalling the important issues, deferring to vested interest and using the cabinet as a closed club in much the same way as the previous administration had done. The issue at stake was whether the Government should be an administrative expression of the party or whether, on the other hand, the party was the electoral arm of an executive that alone was responsible for making the important decisions of the day.

³² *Debates*, 14, 18 Apr. 1934, 259.

³³ The Work Colonies Bill was drafted under the previous administration and its alleged draconian provisions were the subject of considerable controversy. The Bill was initially adopted by Huggins's Government but in April 1934 the Minister of Internal Affairs announced that it would not be proceeded with; *ibid.*, 23 Apr. 1934, 428.

³⁴ Max Danziger, Reform's spokesman on agricultural matters, considered himself to be suited for the portfolio.

With an assurance of support from his former colleagues in the Rhodesian Party, now led by Percy Fynn,³⁵ Huggins, who had never been defeated in the Assembly, was able to drop his party's dissidents and create a new United Party that was to be at the service of his Government and whose candidates for Parliament he would personally select; in this way he would be able to direct affairs very much along the lines that the Colony had experienced from 1923 to 1933. The support of representative institutions that were still attached to the Rhodesian Party, such as the Rhodesia Agricultural Union and Rhodesia Chamber of Mines was, of course, an added attraction.

It would be wrong to state simply that the new United Party was the old Rhodesian Party in disguise. It contained men such as W.S. Senior, Fletcher and Smit, none of whom were inclined to readily jettison important tenets of populist thinking. The 'Conservatives' of Huggins's cabinet differed discernibly from the old fashioned 'Tories' of Moffat's, and all were pledged to the 'reform of proved abuses'. Although Fynn joined the new cabinet and acted for Huggins in the Prime Minister's absence in Britain, Moffat, Leggate and others refused to have anything to do with the United Party preferring instead to remain in the political wilderness. However, empiricism and not ideology became the United Party's guideline and although the Government took an increasing share in the private sector during the 1930s and 1940s, this was more the result of a carefully developed consensus, if not necessity, rather than of any adherence to a binding belief.

The November 1934 election campaign proved to be predictably bitter. The rump of the Reform Party led by Sir Hugh Williams (who alone of the dissidents was to retain his seat) seemed glad to have shed the restrictive responsibilities of power. Free now to voice views closer to those of the Labour Party, which nevertheless consistently spurned them, the Reformers became increasingly virulent. Sir Hugh Williams suggested that the Chartered Company be 'hounded out of the country neck and crop', with or without compensation.³⁶

Wilson, describing economic manipulation of the small man, pointed out that the railways 'grind out' over a million pounds in tribute every year to a financial concern abroad. 'We have tried to buy the right to mine our minerals for £2 million and Southern Rhodesia is still paying interest,' he said. Southern Rhodesia could not keep the gold she mined to stabilize her non-existent currency. Chrome and asbestos mining were controlled from abroad, he observed, and Native Policy was subject to control from abroad. 'Our very land had to be bought by us, the inhabitants, from a company abroad.' Huggins had now returned to the Rhodesian Party, Wilson reminded his listeners,

³⁵ See a statement by A.R. Welsh, Chairman of the Rhodesian Party, *Rh. Her.*, 19 Sept. 1934.

³⁶ *Rh. Her.*, 3 Oct. 1934.

'the timid and fear and finance-riddled party that lost the battle of the mineral rights in 1933; gave the battle away rather than see it fought out to the possible detriment of the international financiers... Today, [however] the Reform Party, pruned of its feeblers members stands more determined than ever that Rhodesia's salvation lies in herself.'³⁷

The 1934 general election saw the extinction of radical populism in Southern Rhodesia.³⁸ The electorate voted for political stability and gave Huggins the mandate that he had requested; if they had wanted a left-wing government they could have voted Labour. Wilson, who had been assisting the Reform Party through the medium of the journal, *New Rhodesia*, came bottom of the poll in his Salisbury Central constituency. The next ten years were to be something of a vacuum in Wilson's political career; and he devoted himself to journalism. He was largely responsible for the establishment of the *Sunday Mail* in 1935 which he managed until, ironically, the Argus Group bought it out; *New Rhodesia*, however, remained independent and Wilson contributed the famous 'Sui Juris' column as well as editing the magazine for many years.

The search for rationalization amongst the opposition groupings (which included the revived Rhodesian Party under Moffat and Leggate) was the main feature of the period 1934-9. Speaking at the Reform Party's 1935 congress, Sir Hugh Williams pointed out that Labour leaders were insistent that Reform sink their identity and merge with the Labour Party. C. Olley, a populist spokesman in the municipal sphere, secured adoption of a resolution restraining the party executive from any further negotiation with Labour. Reform should be seen as 'paddling their own canoe', he argued.³⁹ The party, after 1935, then proceeded to paddle its way into political oblivion.

The same period also saw the emergence of a Union Party seeking incorporation for Southern Rhodesia as a fifth province of the Union of South Africa. Supported largely by Afrikaners in the Eastern and Charter districts who had been affected particularly badly by the Depression, the party contested the 1939 general election with two candidates neither of whom were successful. The party can be safely regarded as representing the protest vote of the politically and economically dispossessed. It offered Union as an escape from African encroachment on the franchise and in the economy, and provided a

³⁷ *New Rhodesia*, 26 Oct. 1934.

³⁸ The United Party won 26 seats, Labour 5, and Reform 1; see Willson, *Parliamentary Elections*, 138.

³⁹ *Rh. Her.*, 1 July 1935.

spiritual home for those Afrikaners who had never really accepted a system which denied them full cultural expression. Although Afrikaners were to form their own political parties again in the years ahead and take an active part in the leadership of others, they never again after 1939 openly sought Union as a solution to their frustrations, preferring instead to lend their electoral weight to populist groupings.

The 1939 election represented almost a straight fight between Labour and the United Party. Labour's platform of humanitarian capitalism, as they described it, signified an important shift in emphasis away from angry and frustrated demands for fundamental rights and conditions which had characterized the party in the 1920s, towards a more mature and balanced plan for national development and State responsibility for the welfare of its citizens.⁴⁰ It was this platform in 1939 that won them their maximum vote potential and which brought the Labour Party to the zenith of its political career.⁴¹

The ideological cleavage that developed within the party after 1939 and socio-economic adjustment which resulted from increased prosperity combined to reduce the fortunes of a party that was never intended to represent the real labouring class. Subsequent Government legislation cut the ground from under Labour and the populist parties. The removal of monopolies, introduction of organized marketing controls, and the enactment of Industrial Conciliation legislation had already gone some way to removing the gulf between left and right that had characterized earlier Rhodesian politics. By 1945 the Government had taken over the Cold Storage Commission, the Electricity Supply Commission, cotton ginning, the air services, the steelworks and the Triangle Sugar Estates, and two years later was to purchase Rhodesia Railways.

In reaction to the implications of increased government participation in the private sector, the Liberal Party emerged in 1944 to challenge Huggins's direction of events. Although Olley, now Mayor of Salisbury, was responsible for the initial moves, the party emerged as the instrument of Raymond Stockil, a Victoria farmer, in alliance with a group of Salisbury lawyers, the most prominent of whom was A.R.W. Stumbles. After some initial overtures to Humphrey Gibbs and George Davenport, the party reluctantly settled on J.H. Smit as leader.⁴² Smit had resigned from Huggins's wartime cabinet in 1942 because he felt that the Prime Minister was partial to the influence of the Coalition's Labour members and because he believed that Southern Rhodesia's

⁴⁰ *New Rhodesia*, 31 Mar. 1939, editorial.

⁴¹ At the General Election of April 1939, the United Party won 23 seats and Labour won 7; see Willson, *Parliamentary Elections*, 147.

⁴² Interview with Sir Raymond Stockil, 10 May 1974.

contribution to the war effort should have been financed through loans and not through increased taxation and burdens on industry. A staunch believer in financial orthodoxy and a free market economy, Smit was in many ways a suitable choice to lead a party that opposed the current level of state participation in the private sector.

It might well be asked at this stage what factors connect Smit and the Liberal Party to the pre-war popular parties. Before the war radicals had urged increased government involvement in the economy to protect certain classes of society. Now their successors in opposition sought to call a halt to that involvement. The War had brought several significant changes; economically, Government was most anxious to involve the African in better agricultural production levels both for the domestic and Empire markets. Politically, Huggins was keen to convince the Dominions and Colonial Offices that Southern Rhodesia's Native Policy was not as divergent from Northern Rhodesia's as Lord Hailey's Report had suggested.⁴³ Amalgamation was still a Government priority and Huggins looked forward to reopening the issue at the end of the War. The gradual drift away from the 'Twin Pyramid' policy which, despite ministerial lip-service and the Native Councils Act of 1937, had never been seriously implemented, alarmed those elements who in 1933 might well have voted for the Reform Party. Their attachment to free enterprise then, was more closely associated with objections to what was seen as Huggins-type 'socialism' and the development of large black labour pools in urban areas as a result of wartime industrial development, than with Gladstonian economic principles.

Arthur Allison, the former Secretary to the Reform Party, agreed to serve the Liberal Party thus providing one of several links with the pre-war era. Wilson was invited by the Liberal leaders to draw up a suitable native policy and he naturally obliged. However, the result reflected the ideological commitment of populists in the 1930s, not the pragmatic and more flexible approach necessitated by post-War circumstances and Wilson's brief relationship with the Liberal Party was soon terminated.⁴⁴ He was now to concentrate on adapting his philosophy to a rapidly changing society at home and abroad.

The Liberals came remarkably close to winning the 1946 General Election⁴⁵ and Huggins ruled for two years by the grace of Labour's

⁴³ Colonial Office Library, London, 'Note on the Bearing of Native Policy on the Proposed Amalgamation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland' (London, H.M.S.O., for confidential use, 1941).

⁴⁴ Interview with Sir Raymond Stockil.

⁴⁵ The United Party won 14 seats, the Liberal Party 11, the Labour Party 3, and the Southern Rhodesia Labour Party 2. Willson, *Parliamentary Elections*, 156, omits to mention that at Lomagundi, G. Hackwill of the United Party successfully appealed against the result and dislodged P. Wise of the Liberal Party. However, Wise recaptured the seat in a subsequent by-election.

support. The Liberal Party operated on what amounted to a populist platform; it urged that Members of Parliament be subject to recall by their constituents, thus subordinating the executive and caucus to the extra-parliamentary party as Reform had aspired to do; it also introduced a motion urging the Government to actively pursue Dominion Status and it advocated the official readoption of the 'Twin Pyramid' policy. However, one particular issue came to dominate the 1947-8 session.

In 1944 a Central African Council had been set up to co-ordinate certain common services in the three Central African territories. An agency of the three territorial governments and not therefore responsible to the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly, the Central African Council was regarded by the Liberal Party as the first step towards Amalgamation. Because Amalgamation or Federation would bring the Colonial Office and its dreaded native policy one step nearer to Salisbury, the whole idea of closer association was anathema to the Liberal Party unless protection in the form of Dominion Status could be first obtained. Smit refused to accept a seat on the Central African Council and the Liberal Party watched its activities with suspicion and outright hostility. Huggins had indeed accepted the creation of the Council as a prelude to a more binding arrangement⁴⁶ and Opposition fears on this score were to prove justified in 1953. Just as Wilson's 1934 motion on Dominion Status had produced little tangible result, so a similar motion in 1948 by A.R.W. Stumbles led to the appointment of a Select Committee whose recommendations were quietly shelved.⁴⁷

At the 1948 General Election the Liberal Party's representation in the Assembly was more than halved.⁴⁸ Huggins had carefully exploited the electorate's traditional fear of Afrikaner nationalism by pointing to Malan's victory in the Union elections and the Liberal Party's Afrikaner support in districts such as Charter, Eastern, Gatooma and Selukwe. It was therefore an emasculated opposition that remained to contest any closer association with the North.

Between 1948 and 1953 a series of conferences at the Victoria Falls and in London laid the groundwork for the federation of the

⁴⁶ P.R.O., D.O. 35/R208/1161 (Dominions, Original Correspondence 1926-46), 'Summary of the History of Closer Association', minute, January 1946.

⁴⁷ Southern Rhodesia, 'Final Report of the Select Committee on Amendment of the Constitution', in *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, Fourth Session, Seventh Parliament, 10th April ... to 27th November 1951* (Salisbury, Govt Printer, 1952), 12 Apr., 17-33.

⁴⁸ The United Party won 24 seats, the Liberal Party 5, and the Rhodesia Labour Party 1, Willson, *Parliamentary Elections*, 163.

Rhodesias and Nyasaland.⁴⁹ The inherent danger of the scheme confirmed the opposition's resistance; for it brought Southern Rhodesia into closer association with the northern territories without conferring on her or the Federal Government a final say in the direction of domestic affairs, and it specifically permitted the United Kingdom a degree of influence that she would undoubtedly exercise on behalf of the African population.

Stockil now assumed leadership of the opposition Rhodesia Party (the name taken by the rump of the Liberal Party) and joined with a renegade United Party backbencher, J.R. Dendy-Young, to form the Rhodesia Association in order to oppose Huggins's United Central Africa Association and its propagation of the Federal Scheme at the 1953 referendum. While the United Central Africa Association comprised basically the Southern Rhodesia United Party in alliance with a few prominent Northern Rhodesians, such as Roy Welensky and Guy van Eeden, the Rhodesia Association comprised the Rhodesia Party and a few notable United Party and Labour supporters such as Dendy-Young, Colonel E. Lucas Guest, J. Keller and H. Davies.

Olley and other populist veterans were understandably inclined to support the Rhodesia Association. Olley described Federation as 'a capitalist racket' and said that Southern Rhodesia was being asked to save the Copperbelt and the magnates who had donated £27 000 to the United Central Africa Association. 'These vested interests — the B.S.A. Company and other mining interests — are not spending this money for nothing,' Olley observed, and went on to claim that Federation laid the foundation for the mongrelization of Rhodesian children.⁵⁰ Veteran Labour leader, Jack Keller, declared that the Colonial Office was training Africans to take over white jobs — but not at white rates of pay. If Africans were given social equality in the Federal Parliament, Keller claimed, it would mean that social barriers would have to go in hotels, cinemas, hospitals and schools.⁵¹

One notable dissident from the Rhodesia Association campaign was N.H. Wilson. Although a keen advocate of Dominion Status in the past, he now refused to identify himself with the 'Little Rhodesia' mentality of other populists. Always a visionary and believer in bold experiments, the concept of Federation appealed to him immensely. In 1949 he had founded with Colonel David Stirling the Capricorn Africa Society which he had hoped would become the agency of a Central and East African Dominion where a communal electoral roll

⁴⁹ See Great Britain, *Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland: The Federal Scheme* [Cmd. 8754] (H.C. 1952-3, xxiii, 467).

⁵⁰ *Rh. Her.*, 26 Mar. 1953.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 31 Mar. 1953.

would maintain racial differentiation but where massive Western investment and white immigration would create a genuine partnership for progress. He saw Federation in Central Africa as the first link in this chain, and like most others in the United Central Africa Association, saw in closer association an extension northward of Southern Rhodesia's 'way of life' rather than any subordination to the Colonial Office. The preservation of 'Western civilization' in Central Africa 'would furnish the strongest reasons for supporting the proposals', he stated at a United Central Africa Association meeting.⁵² Wilson considered Federation to be 'the greatest step towards full self-government since Responsible Government'.⁵³ He was therefore quite consistent in terms of political or ideological outlook. He had always believed that only a large white population would oblige the African to realize the permanence of European settlement in Central Africa. Federation provided an opportunity to attract settlement on the sort of scale that he had long envisaged; consequently his 'Twin Pyramid' policy was adapted to suit the new circumstances of Central Africa that also determined an increasingly meritocratic society.

In October 1950 Wilson explained in *New Rhodesia* that his initial 'Twin Pyramid' plan did specifically aim at making the European 'pyramid' one on which the racial interests of the European would be paramount.

As it had developed, however, it has been seen that it is only necessary to establish it as an area where certain cultural standards, or standards of living, should be paramount, and that African Natives, provided they obtained these standards, could be admitted to the [European] pyramid. This pyramid should be called the "European Standards Pyramid" to emphasise that the controlling factor is a standard of civilization, not colour.⁵⁴

However, Wilson saw no real threat to this 'pyramid' because large-scale immigration would introduce skilled and unskilled Europeans to occupy the lower steps alongside Africans. Thus Wilson's 'pyramids' would continue to rise from the veld of Central Africa, a monument to empirical consistency. Central Africa, Wilson hoped, would become a great Dominion, supporting a population of some 20 million Europeans, providing a bulwark against the march of 'Afrikaner Nazism' from the south and 'African chaos [and] Asiatic communism from the north'.⁵⁵

However, within a very short time, Wilson became impatient and dissatisfied with the way in which his great ideal was being implement-

⁵² Ibid., 12 Mar. 1953.

⁵³ Ibid., 8 Apr. 1954.

⁵⁴ 'Two Pyramids versus apartheid', *New Rhodesia*, 6 Oct. 1950.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 13 Oct. 1950.

ed. Although he joined the new Confederate Party in 1953 as an ordinary member, he took little part in their election campaigns of 1953 and 1954. The Confederates were too closely identified with the referendum campaign against Federation (the party was led by Dendy-Young) to make much progress although their segregationist Native policy must have seemed familiar to him. He joined them like many others, not because he thought they would win, but 'to keep the spirit of the populist sector alive'.⁵⁶ Individual members of the party launched *The Citizen* as an 'independent' tabloid in 1953 and within a short time the newspaper had reached an impressive circulation which provided an important platform for the Opposition. When the Confederate Party failed to win a seat in the Southern Rhodesian General Election and managed to return only one member to the Federal Assembly (Dendy-Young), Wilson became convinced that the only formula for opposition electoral success was the development of a party that transcended the loyalties and attitudes that had been associated with the referendum campaign. His inspiration, naturally enough, was the Reform Party of 1930 which had been formed across the divisions of the Responsible Government Association-Unionist referendum campaign of 1922.

In this belief, he enjoyed the company of the Confederate Party's English-speaking executive members, many of them now only too conscious of the electoral damage caused by Dendy-Young's relationship with the dubious Afrikaner Democratic Party whose members sat on the executive of the Confederate Party. For the same reason, Stockil had refused to associate with the Confederates and had successfully fought the 1954 General Election as an 'Independent Rhodesia Party' candidate. The inevitable split within the Confederate Party provided him with the opportunity that he, Wilson, and others had patiently awaited. The Rhodesia Party was given new vigour and negotiations were initiated with moderate elements within the Confederate Party (thus pre-empting a Confederate link-up with Van Eeden, now an Independent in the Federal House).⁵⁷ On 18 February 1956, the formation of the Dominion Party was announced in Lusaka, with Winston Field as President, Stockil as Southern Rhodesian leader and Wilson as National Secretary.

Wilson had launched a Dominion Party in 1948, whose two candidates had lost their deposits at the election of that year; the title he borrowed from a Dominion Party that had been envisaged but not

⁵⁶ Interview with Mr P. Hanson (National Secretary, Confederate Party, 1953-4), 26 July 1973.

⁵⁷ *Rh. Her.*, 7 Jan. 1956.

actually inaugurated as early as 1926. When John Gaunt resigned from the Confederate Party in 1954, he subsequently announced the formation of a Rhodesia Dominion Party.⁵⁸ Wilson now insisted that at least some of the new party's principles should reflect the aims of his Dominion Party of 1948. These were, in essence, the protection of the unskilled European and the development of the African in his own areas, that is 'Twin Pyramid'.⁵⁹ Although the phraseology might differ, Wilson's influence is apparent in the Dominion Party's first policy statement. The European was promised a permanent place in Central Africa and the party stressed 'the necessity for European control and political leadership for the foreseeable future', but recognized that this leadership depended upon 'the general acceptance and implementation of a just and practical native policy based on principles of equality and common justice'. The Dominion Party promised that when it became the Government of the Federation 'the State would secure for all reasonable housing, health, education, employment, Old Age Pensions and social services'.⁶⁰ Clearly, post-war prosperity had not entirely erased populist sentiment. Within a short time the party was able to build up a network of differentiated local groups in the hope that the extra-parliamentary party would always control the professional political wing. In this respect the system closely resembled the Liberal Party's recall plan, and the Reform Party's insistence on executive responsibility to congress.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Gaunt's Rhodesia Dominion Party was a predominantly Northern Rhodesian grouping but it enjoyed a following in Bulawayo as a result of the adherence of I. McLean, another prominent ex-Confederate. The party, which advocated a separate voters roll for Africans, made it clear from the outset that it would be happy to fuse with any emergent party of similar views. Similarly, another Northern Rhodesian party, the United Dominion Party, which advocated a separate voters roll and increased parliamentary representation for Northern Rhodesia, was searching for a political home. Stockil's announcement at the beginning of December 1955 that the Rhodesia Party would become more active and advocate 'the economic and material advancement of the African rather than the artificially rapid political and academic advancement of the native people', prompted Gaunt's group to make contact with a view to fusion. The Labour leader, Keller, said he would also be prepared to lend his support to any party run by men of repute (as distinct from the Confederates) which included 'those main principles for which Labour in this country has always stood'. He added that he was no longer particularly concerned about nationalization of industry. However, both Keller and Gaunt resigned from the Dominion Party shortly after its inception; see *Rh. Her.*, 10 and 16 Oct., 2 and 7 Dec. 1955.

⁵⁹ Interview with Mr S.E. Aitken-Cade, 6 June 1974.

⁶⁰ *The Sunday News*, 19 Feb. 1956.

⁶¹ The Rhodesian Front was to successfully entrench this tenet of populist thinking by amending their party constitution in 1963 thereby subordinating the party executive to congress rather than government; see Rhodesian Front, *Constitution* (May 1962) with amendments, and D.J. Murray, *The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970), 367.

Wilson was now quite convinced that the events of 1930-3 were about to repeat themselves. Both the Responsible Government Association and the United Central Africa Association had conducted successful referendum campaigns subsequent to which their protagonists had formed governments and won sweeping electoral victories (Todd's United Rhodesia Party secured 26 seats in 1954, just as Coghlan had in 1924). Then, opposition parties had developed that transcended political divisions created by the referendum campaigns. Just as the Reform Party swept to power in 1933 so, Wilson was convinced, the Dominion Party would in 1958.⁶² He reckoned without Todd's Electoral Amendment Act of 1957 which introduced a preferential voting system.⁶³ Wilson attempted to counter this by persuading Stockil to appeal to the Governor for a suspension of the Constitution — his only expedient as the Electoral Act was entrenched legislation.⁶⁴ The Governor's rejection of Stockil's appeal enabled Sir Edgar Whitehead, the new Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister, to argue that the Dominion Party was seeking refuge in British authority and thereby undermining Southern Rhodesian self-government. In the event, Wilson's fears were borne out. The Dominion Party won a majority of the electorate's first preference votes in the territorial General Election of June 1958. The party's candidates came top of the poll in 17 of the Colony's constituencies while the United Federal Party headed the poll in only 13. However, when the second preference votes were distributed the position was reversed, the Dominion Party being left with only 13 seats in the Assembly.⁶⁵ Dominion Party supporters had opted for the United Federal Party in second preference to Todd's breakaway United Rhodesia Party while Todd supporters had declared for the United Federal Party in second preference to the Dominion Party. As intended, the party in the centre benefited from the preference system. Wilson urged Stockil to appeal against the result but Stockil was anxious to forsake the political scene for economic development in the lowveld. S. Aitken-Cade and then W. Harper succeeded him as Leader of the Opposition.

When the Dominion Party suffered an even more serious setback at the Federal elections of November 1958, Wilson like many others saw little prospect of making the Federation politically viable or of changing its direction. The defeat of his Central African Alliance plan at the election which proposed to declare Southern Rhodesia, the Copperbelt and the Kafue farmlands an independent Dominion, and

⁶² *New Rhodesia*, 5 Feb. 1954.

⁶³ Electoral Amendment Acts, 38 of 1957, and 13 of 1958.

⁶⁴ Interview with Sir Raymond Stockil.

⁶⁵ Willson, *Parliamentary Elections*, 180.

the now inevitable constitutional advance of Africans in the northern territories, turned Wilson into a Little Rhodesian. Although he did not live long enough to see Harper's 'Southern Rhodesia First' campaign produce a split with Field, all the ingredients were there after 1958, and his formation in 1960 of the Southern Rhodesia Association with Mrs Dicks, territorial Secretary of the Dominion Party, was a recognition of this development. The Southern Rhodesia Association sought to construct a non-partisan front of opinion to resist further inroads that might jeopardize Southern Rhodesia's 'way of life' such as the Monckton Commission of Inquiry into the future of Federation. In many ways the Association characterized his life's work — an attempt to cultivate and mobilize opinion on the basis of a platform that was at once broad-based, 'popular' and coherent.

Wilson's involvement, then, in Southern Rhodesian politics spanned the years from the grant of Responsible Government to the visit of the Monckton Commission that sealed the fate of Federation. How can this contribution be viewed in the context of populist politics?

Any analysis of the dynamics of populism must give serious consideration to the structural relationship of any given political party with various individuals, representative institutions or economic associations. For instance, the smallworkers' Rhodesian Mining Federation played a substantial role in winning electoral support for the Reform Party in 1933. As Murray indicates, the Rhodesian Mining Federation virtually was the Reform Party in the Midlands,⁶⁶ and its President, W.S. Senior, became Minister of Mines in Huggins's administration.

Likewise, the Reform Party enjoyed the support of Midlands and Matabeleland cattle farmers, and of disgruntled maize growers, also mainly in the Midlands, who opposed the new controls system. Huggins's first Minister of Agriculture was C.S. Jobling who had been President of the Matabeleland Farmers Union. When Huggins contemplated fusion with the Opposition under Fynn, he was attracted, not only by the prospect of ridding himself of backbench dissidents, but by the substantial array of representative bodies with which the Rhodesian Party was associated. An alliance with the Opposition would bring into the Government fold the Rhodesia Chamber of Mines (including as it did Sir Edmund Davis's substantial interests and the British South Africa Company), the Rhodesia Agricultural Union, the Rhodesia Tobacco Association and the Eastern Farmers Association. When Senior followed Huggins into the United Party, the Rhodesia Mining Federation was

⁶⁶ Murray, *The Governmental System*, 133.

bitterly split on which party to support, for the rump Reform leader, Sir Hugh Williams, was also a prominent smallworker, and a substantial section of the Federation withdrew its support from the Minister's attempts to associate smallworkers with Government's plans for the industry; instead it remained loyal to Reform or backed the Labour Party.

Again, when the Liberals came close to winning the General Election of 1946, it was with the support of smallworkers.⁶⁷ The Chairman of the Smallworkers and Tributors Association, G. Munro, won Gatooma for the Liberal Party and another prominent smallworker, P. Wise, won Hartley in a 1947 by-election.⁶⁸ However, it must be noted that by 1946 the number of smallworkers in the country had declined sharply from a record figure of 3 000 in 1936 when the Depression had obliged many farmers to seek a livelihood prospecting.⁶⁹ As a result, post-war populist parties such as the Liberals were not so dependent on smallworkers' support as the Progressive or Reform Parties had been.

On the other hand, small farmers consistently constituted a major sector of the populist alliance, and their representation was of ideological as well as material importance. The trust bestowed by the Rhodesian electorate on men of the land was to some extent attributable to the populist belief that the farmer tilled his land in a spirit of altruism that removed him from the sordid manipulations of Capital. He alone was the repository of the colonial ideal of land settlement and unselfish endeavour. His dependence for credit on interest-charging foreign-owned banks was hardly calculated to endear him to the finance-capital sector. The big landowners who administered their property for profit were identified as part of the Rhodesian Establishment with its roots abroad.

The small commercial sector was also a bulwark of the populist cause, from the protagonists of Responsible Government in the early 1920s to the economic nationalists of the 1960s. All this does not suggest that the various sectors of the populist alliance were without individual or conflicting aims. There are several examples of intra-populist dissension, of which the issue of marketing controls is perhaps the most important. However, all felt themselves to be the victims of exploitation by the capitalist sector and its client government which understood very little and cared even less about the predicament of the small man. It was the common identity of victimization by the same network of Government-Company-Establishment that bred collective action, although such action had to be channelled and directed.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁶⁸ Willson, *Parliamentary Elections*, 156, 162.

⁶⁹ Murray, *The Governmental System*, 149.

Murray has clinically dissected the governmental system into neatly competitive or complementary compartments. By so doing he has tended to overlook forces that relate many of his seemingly disparate elements, one to the other. Huggins could never have presented such an attractive platform in 1933 had Wilson not laid the political ground, cultivated public opinion by a torrent of propaganda and newspaper comment, and successfully devised a formula that sought to deal effectively with the Native Question. Elections were won, not so much by an alliance between representative associations and Government as by an alliance of like-minded groups who manifested themselves very often in the sort of associations that Murray analyses. However, it is doubtful whether these associations would have been forces in their own right had they not comprised groupings who were related to each other more firmly across the divisions of Murray's system.

The emphasis placed upon associations operating on their own individual and mercenary axis precludes effective analysis of the ideological dynamics that motivated the formation of both political parties and economic associations. Olley's Amalgamated Commercial Employees Association admittedly sought to secure a shop hours ordinance and his Ratepayers Association was again ostensibly a body of limited objectives. However, Olley's populist sentiments dictated that the bodies with which he was associated became part of a broader front against monopolies in general and the Chartered Company in particular. Even the White Rhodesia Council that Olley founded to oppose amendments in the Land Apportionment Act focused its attention on capitalist interests in the Federation that were supposedly behind the 'partnership' ideal. Thus when Murray discusses the formation and impact of representative institutions and economic associations without seriously considering ideological motivation, he begs the fundamental question of Rhodesian politics.

Had Wilson not articulated the frustrations of disparate populist factions, it is doubtful whether Rhodesian opposition politics would have taken the form that it did. Wilson, and to a lesser extent Olley in the *Rhodesian Monthly Review*, provided a coherent doctrine and rationale to which individuals with ordinary grievances could turn for inspiration. Thus Huggins in 1933 was able to exploit a carefully constructed repository of political thought that might otherwise have remained the inarticulate and untapped preserve of disgruntled farmers or shopkeepers. Wilson's unification of the Progressive and Country Parties in 1929 was as much an essential ideological operation as an electoral expedient. He provided the philosophical dynamics that generated directly a series of political parties, and indirectly, the formation of economic associations.

The Southern Rhodesian populist sector underwent a post-war transition. Once a body of protective legislation had been accumulated on the statute book, the populist parties lost much of their initial cohesion and ceased to be radical in terms of dynamics. Instead they sought to preserve their existing wall of protective measures from the incursions of post-war governmental and economic expediency. They opposed every potential inroad; from the Land Apportionment Amendment Acts and the Liquor Licensing Amendment Act to the appointment of the Monckton Commission and the 1961 Constitution. In this respect they became reactionary; thus the label, 'right-wing, middle-class radicalism', applies generally to the Southern Rhodesian scene in the 1930s when a substantial sector of the middle class was radicalized by economic privation, but it does not apply to the 1950s; U.D.I., whilst admittedly a radical gesture, should be seen in the context of general reaction. 'We are right-wing Conservatives,'⁷⁰ Ian Smith has said, and the intention is undoubtedly to conserve a system of safeguards that the radicals of the 1930s fought so hard to establish.

Because attitudes towards the African have now become the gauge by which political labels are defined, the inheritors of the pre-war populist or 'left-wing' legacy are now self-defined as 'right-wing'. This should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the artisan of the 1950s was as equally anxious to prevent exploitation of cheap labour and job division as his pre-war counterpart. The Depression initiated a period of insecurity that post-war prosperity did little to diminish; the Reform Party's geo-political power base in 1933 differed little from that of the Dominion Party in 1958.

N.H. Wilson's contribution lay in his ability to identify the various populists' power centres — *small farmers, smallworkers, shopkeepers, disillusioned politicians* — to unite and provide them with a coherent and consistent body of political doctrine that articulated their grievances, to emphasize the ideological gulf between this body of opinion and Government thinking, and then in the event of electoral defeat, to revive and reestablish as immutable the values and sentiments of the populist sector.

Wilson persistently sought an alliance or front that would unite on a popular platform all those opposed to the forces of governmental expediency. The Southern Rhodesia Association represented an attempt to create such a front in the face of the Monckton Inquiry. Had Wilson lived to see another front win the confidence of the electorate in 1962, he would undoubtedly have approved the repetition of the events of 1933 and the success of the populist factor in Rhodesian politics.⁷¹

⁷⁰ I.D. Smith speaking on R.B.C., 8 Feb. 1973.

⁷¹ Interview with L.K.S. Wilson.



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